

Surrey Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday 10 December 2020 1.00pm Virtual Meeting on TEAMS (due to COVID 19)

Approved by members at their meeting on 12 January 2021

Present

Chair

Rhona Barnfield Howard of Effingham School (academy member)

Joint Vice Chairs

Kate Keane Ewell Grove Infant and Nursery School (Primary head)

Justin Price Freemantles School Special school head

Other school and academy members:

Donna Harwood-Duffy Dorking nursery Maintained nursery head

Katie Aldred Bagshot Infant School Primary Head

Susan Chrysanthou Furzefield Primary Primary Head

David Euridge Reigate Valley/Wey Valley PRUs PRU member

Geoffrey Hackett Burpham Primary Primary governor

Eric Peacock Thorpe C of E Primary Primary governor

Lisa Kent Manor Mead and Walton Leigh Schools (special governor)

Matthew Armstrong-Harris Rodborough Academy member

Sir Andrew Carter South Farnham Primary Academy member

Elaine Cooper SWAN academy trust Academy member

Gavin Dutton Pirbright School Academy member

Jo Hastings Ottershaw Infant and Junior Schools (Academy member)

Ruth Murton Thamesmead School Academy member

Kerry Oakley The Warwick Academy member

Neil Miller Bramley Oak Academy Special academy member

Non school members

Sue Lewis Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers

Benedicte Symcox Family Voice Surrey

Joe Dunne RC Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

Tamsin Honeybourne Teaching union member of Education Joint Committee (EJC)

Nick Trier Teaching union member of Education Joint Committee

Christine Ricketts Post 16 providers

Cabinet member for All Age Learning

Julie Iles

Local Authority Officers

Liz Mills (LM) Director–Education, Lifelong Learning & Culture

Eamonn Gilbert (EG) Assistant Director (Commissioning)

Louise Lawson (LL) Deputy Strategic Finance Business Partner (ELLC)

David Green (DG) Senior Finance Business Partner (Schools Funding)

1 Election of Chair and Vice Chairs

DG reported that the previous Chair (Rhona Barnfield) and Vice Chairs (Kate Keane and Justin Price) had been re-elected unopposed.

2 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Zoe Johnson-Walker	The Winston Churchill School	Secondary head
Fred Greaves	Oakwood School	Secondary governor
Jonathan Gambier	Guildford Diocese (C of E)	
Kate Carriett	George Abbot School	Academy member
Nicky Mann	Wallace Fields Infant	Academy member

The Chair welcomed new members: Kerry Oakley and Christine Ricketts and returning member: Donna Harwood-Duffy. A further new member (Zoe Johnson-Walker) had sent apologies.

3 Declarations of interest (where not self evident)

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of previous meeting (10 November 2020) and matters arising

Accuracy

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as accurate.

Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on agenda)

DG reported that the disapplication request (to transfer funding from schools block to the high needs block) had been submitted to DfE on 20 November and had been acknowledged, but that it was not known when the outcome would be known.

5 Government spending review

LM reported that the spending review had not yielded any additional funding for schools. Further details were still awaited on early years funding for 2021/22. The main issue of relevance to schools had been the proposed public sector pay freeze and she aimed to give schools some assistance in planning for pay costs.

Arrangements for centrally employed teachers and for teachers in community schools for 2020/21 were likely to be finalised in February 2021. The main issues were the proposal to move from 11 pay points to six on the main pay scale (which was being recommended in Surrey) and proposals to move to national levels of sickness and maternity benefits (which were lower than Surrey's). Schools had been advised to budget for a 3% increase.

DfE had indicated that the promised £30k minimum starting salary for teachers might now be phased in over a slightly longer period than previously intended. Schools were still advised to budget for a 3% increase in teachers' pay.

Schools had been advised to budget for a 2% increase in the cost of Surrey Pay staff. Government policy was for a pay freeze for staff earning more than

£24,000, however, 70% of the estimated cost of Surrey Pay staff was for staff paid less than that. The council's pay committee (PPDC) was meeting that day to consider the issue. Presently budgeting advice was still to allow for 2%.

EJC reps commented that the proposed reductions in maternity and sickness pay for teachers had been a major issue, particularly in view of the pandemic. Members had been angry about these proposals. LM replied that the proposals were being thoroughly debated, as was right. The national position was understood but it was right that negotiations should be held.

Members noted that the move from an 11 point scale to a six point scale would incur significant costs for some schools. EJC reps suggested that there could be disputes in any maintained schools which did not adopt the six point scale recommended by the review body.

6a Request for approval of proposed centrally managed Schools Block budgets

DG asked the Forum to approve proposed expenditure in 2021/22 from the centrally managed Schools Block, noting that this was funding which had never been delegated to schools. The funding supported services relevant to all schools. This was not an issue affecting the school funding formula and hence all members could vote.

There was a slight increase in total available funding and some adjustment of costs of individual services.

Members had no questions to ask.

Members approved the proposed central expenditure by 19 votes to nil.

6b Request for approval of proposed “central services levy” deductions from maintained schools

DG asked maintained school representatives to approve the proposed deduction of £35.98/pupil from maintained school budgets, to support expenditure on LA duties for maintained schools only. The proposed deduction was at the same rate per pupil as 2020/21 and the total value of the proposed deduction was the same as estimated for 2020/21, rather than assuming a reduction for future academy conversions. This was because there had been an appreciable fall in the rate of academy conversions, from around 10% pa (by pupil numbers) a few years ago to only 3% (by pupils), or 7 schools, in the current year. The estimates for 2020/21 had assumed a further 10% reduction.

Maintained school representatives agreed the proposed deductions by 7 votes to nil.

7 Update on high needs block working group meeting (4 December)

LM reported that the group had met for a “really positive” first meeting on 4 December. Separate groups were being established to take forward the individual areas within the terms of reference:

- **Sufficiency:** how to create additional places in September 2021 to maximise the use of the good and outstanding specialist school provision in Surrey, for key stage transfers in Sept 2021 but also for children who could be moved into Surrey schools mid key stage and for children needing placements part way through the year. A letter was being sent to every school in Surrey inviting expressions of interest in new provision for a third round of capital investment 350 additional places were needed for September 2021 via a number of schemes, including new SEN centres This group would include Schools Forum reps but also needed to reflect the importance of therapies and wrap around support and the need for communications with parents. Land and property colleagues and SAFE reps would also be involved.
- **Inclusion**
There was a need to celebrate current good practice in inclusion and to build on existing whole school SEN work, also to ensure access to high quality and timely support services eg from CAMHS, therapies and education psychology, and to strengthen the outreach offer and partnerships between special schools and mainstream schools. A core inclusion group was proposed, to be supported by wider specialist representation. The aim was to pool resources and strengthen multidisciplinary working. There was also a need to improve tribunal work.
- **Alternative provision**
The group had recognised a need for better provision for the increasing number of children unable to attend school through anxiety, and also for more therapy support.

Alix Cordell had issued a quick survey to headteachers on alternative provision needs.

One special school rep noted the recognition of the need for increased therapy provision and noted the difficulties in securing therapies. She also noted that wrap round care could be attractive to parents, but that it was often delivered by the voluntary sector. Should the group consider how this could be developed? LM agreed that it could be within the group’s scope.

The high needs block working group membership comprised Rhona Barnfield (Chair), Kate Keane, Mark Bryant and Justin Price (special schools), secondary headteacher (TBA), David Euridge (AP), Nicola Dykes (health), Maria Dawes (SAFE), Sue Lewis (Early Years) and various LA officers. The working group would have an overview, but a much wider range of people would work on individual areas.

LM suggested that currently the delivery of therapies did not make the most effective use of resources and could be better focused.

One member commented that it had been a really positive meeting in identifying the right people to lead change.

The Family Voice rep welcomed the focus on children with anxiety and also noted that the AP survey had followed consultation with Family Voice.

The Family Voice rep expressed concerns that some parents had been told that they could not access wrap around care because of contractual difficulties in extending hours of staff providing 1:1 support.

8 Update on special schools banding group

EG reported that a working group of special school headteachers was meeting regularly. They had considered a core financial analysis and agreed an outline structure. Seven needs bands were proposed across all special schools, the seventh (highest) would be for individual negotiations for the highest cost pupils, who might otherwise need to be placed in independent schools. The thresholds for each band had yet to be agreed. Bands would relate to the child not to the school and should be identified on placement. In most schools, most pupils would be on the same band, but it would be possible to have pupils in a school on different bands and for individual pupils to move between bands. The number and separation of bands was important. Too few bands would mean too large a step between bands, while too many would mean it would be difficult to assign children to individual bands.

A set of need descriptors had been proposed as a guide. EG suggested that there had been reasonable consensus over bands 1-3, but less over bands 4-6 where the initial descriptors had been seen by schools as too focused on staffing needs rather than on other areas of support. Headteachers would feed back on the descriptors at an additional meeting on 16 Dec. Descriptors would be rewritten following that meeting and then shared more broadly. A further meeting of the group was planned for 1 Feb to agree the descriptors and funding, and to agree plans and timescales for implementation, either April or September 2021. It was suggested that if the changes could not be implemented for maintained schools in April 2021 then they should be deferred until April 2022 for maintained schools.

The Chair noted that most staff contracts were for academic years.

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Group members commented that there had not been consensus over the descriptors at the last meeting and that getting the descriptors right was very important. Heads had wanted to contribute to development of the descriptors, seeing them as not reflecting current needs.

The family voice rep suggested that parents may have concerns that the descriptors might influence case officers in describing a child's needs, rather than starting the EHCP process by defining those needs. She suggested that EHCPs needed to be more clearly written to identify pupils' needs and that parents saw too much reliance on the needs banding. She commented that bespoke support could sometimes be the cheapest way of meeting needs.

EG argued that developing the descriptors increased transparency over how needs (as expressed in an EHCP) related to funding. The proposals aimed to move funding from IPSB into the extended banding but would not undermine EHCPs. There was a need to reduce the administration for special schools and the LA around IPSB funding. He hoped to reach agreement at the next meeting on a set of descriptors, which could then be shared more widely.

LM noted that a banding system was already used in funding special schools but that we were trying to refine it to take into account changing needs.

The phase 2 (mainstream) banding review would start in January 2021, targeted for implementation in September 2021. EG suggested that this would need a very different model and a different working group.

9 Capita SIMS charging update

DG reminded the Forum that, at the previous meeting, “de-delegation” of funding for Capita SIMS licences had been approved for 2021/22 at current costs plus unspecified inflation. However, he thought it right to advise the Forum that the cost increase for 2021/22 (and the next two years) had now been advised at 7.5% (the better of two options on offer). IT colleagues had advised that, even so, the Surrey contract was still competitive for schools.

The Forum had no questions on this item.

10 Growing schools funding and criteria for 2021/22

DG asked the Forum to approve the proposed growing schools budget and criteria for 2021/22. This budget funds additional classes admitted in September 2021 as a result of PAN growth or new bulge classes. The proposed criteria were unchanged from 2020/21 and the proposed budget was in line with the estimated DfE growth funding (approx. £900k less than in 2020/21), reflecting reduced expectations of pupil growth.

DG noted that in 2020/21 an underspend of £0.8m was expected on growth fund, partly due to pupil growth in secondary schools being lower than anticipated and partly due to fewer extra late bulge classes being required than in previous years (ie when September 2020 pupil numbers were known).

DG advised that this should be seen as a vote on the funding formula and thus only school, academy and early years members should vote.

The Forum agreed all of the recommendations for budget and criteria for the growth fund for 2021/22 by a clear majority.

DG drew the Forum’s attention to the list of expanding schools which were to be funded on estimated average pupil numbers for 2021/22. (Annex B) The cost over and above use of Oct 2020 pupil numbers was a cost set against DfE growth funding.

11 Schools Forum business

Note change of date of May meeting (to 14 May)

Items for January meeting:

- proposed final mainstream funding rates,
- outcome of additional SEN consultation,
- work on traded options for behaviour support and REMA travellers for possible implementation in 2022/23.

12 Any other business

None

Meeting ended 2.15pm

Date of next meeting Tuesday 12 January 2021 1pm, virtual meeting on
TEAMS